

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

United States Department of Agriculture,

BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY,

Seed and Plant Introduction and Distribution,

WASHINGTON, D. C.

RED KAFIR CORN (*Andropogon sorghum* var.).

Red Kafir corn, like white Kafir corn and milo, is a dwarf and leafy variety of sorghum, some strains of which possess quite sweet and juicy stems. The heads are erect, long, cylindrical, and are made up of numerous red, roundish, flinty grains. It is equal to the black-hulled Kafir corn and nearly equal to milo in drought resistance and is especially adapted to Kansas, Oklahoma, the Panhandle of Texas, southern Colorado, and portions of California, New Mexico, and Arizona. Red Kafir corn frequently yields from 40 to 50 bushels of grain per acre. A crop 5½ feet high and well headed will yield about 6 tons per acre.

Planting.—The seed should be planted about three or four weeks later than the season for Indian corn, medium-early plantings usually giving the best results. It may be replanted either flat or in a lister furrow. The latter method is preferred in sandy sections because it affords protection to the young plants during the windy spring. Red Kafir corn is usually planted in rows 3 feet apart, so that the crop may be cultivated. At this distance it requires about 6 to 10 pounds per acre. This will give a fairly thick and regular planting and a very uniform, even crop. If seeded less thickly, the plants become too coarse and uneven. If grown for hay, drill the rows 12 to 18 inches apart.

Cultivation.—Red Kafir corn should be cultivated much the same as Indian corn. It may be given two or three harrowings while the plants are small, and as soon as sufficient growth is made the crop should be given a fairly deep and thorough cultivation. Two or three subsequent and shallower cultivations are desirable. If seeded in close drill rows, the crop should be harrowed early and cultivated later in the season with a weeder.

Harvesting.—For the best quality and yield of fodder and grain the crop should be cut in the late dough stage. If planted in 3-foot rows for fodder, the crop should be cut with a corn harvester and put in shocks of 40 to 50 bundles each. If the crop is planted solely for the grain yield, it should be allowed to stand in the field until the heads are thoroughly mature. It can be cut and put in shocks, to be headed and stored later. If the crop is to be headed standing, it should be allowed to stand until the stem at the base of the head is dry, and no longer. This usually takes from two to four weeks after the grain is mature. In case the heads are cut by hand from the standing stalks the remaining part of the crop is best pastured in the field.

Feeding.—Red Kafir corn is equal to black-hulled white Kafir corn and nearly equal to Indian corn in feeding value. In sections where it is grown it is fed in bundles or in the head to work horses, cattle, and hogs. Stock seem to relish it, and work horses are kept in good condition on this crop as a feed. When fed with a little cotton-seed meal it makes an excellent fattening feed.

Suggestions.—Plantings of this seed should be compared to the black-hulled white Kafir corn as to uniformity, quality, and yield of forage per acre.

As in all sorghums the rate of seeding has a marked influence on the evenness and yield of the crop, every farmer should make at least three different seedings on the same date, planting the seeds 4, 8, and 12 inches apart in the drill row. In this way he can determine the best rate of seeding for his locality.

Seed selection.—Every farmer should select his own seed for planting. This is best done in the field as soon as the first heads are mature. Only medium dwarf early plants that have no stools or side branches should be selected, and for the best forage these must have very sweet, juicy stems. They should also bear from 13 to 14 leaves. The head should be long, cylindrical in shape, and not pointed at the top or at the butt. Careful selections for this type will not only increase the yield and uniformity of the crop, but will materially raise its quality as a feed. Selections should always be made near the center of the field or at least 100 yards from any other variety, as the sorghums cross very freely. Care should also be taken to remove the other sorts of sorghum that may be in the patch from which selections are to be made. The results of the past two years' work have shown that selections thus made tend to come true to type. After two seasons of such selection the variety should be perfectly uniform.



